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RELATIONSHIP OF ACADEMIA SINICA TO RESEARCH IN UNIVERSITIES

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[Comment: The head of the History Department of Peking University deplores the lack of coordination between the Academia Sinica and the universities in scientific research and calls upon the academy to assume its role as the command headquarters for the establishment of a scientific research network in China. Professor Chien's views were voiced in an article entitled "Regarding the Problem of Scientific Research Work in Higher Institutions of Learning," in which he hints, while praising Soviet science, that Marxism-Leninism is throttling scientific experimentation. The following is a summary of pertinent information from the article.]

Higher education, including scientific research conducted in higher educational institutions, is controlled by the Ministry of Higher Education. During the half year following a comprehensive universities conference, the Ministry of Higher Education set up key scientific research programs in some comparatively advanced schools, hoping thereby to establish new records in these schools so that the program might be expanded. The Ministry of Higher Education has exerted great effort regarding the organization and progress of scientific research work in higher educational schools. But if we want this work to develop progressively, the Academia Sinica must also consider itself responsible for this work.

I remember that in a short report on the organization of the Academia Sinica a leading comrade pointed out that the academy should become the general staff headquarters for the direction of all scientific research work in China. The concept of national scientific research work involves higher education. For the past several years, the work of the academy has been tending toward this direction.

After the reorganization of higher education, there must be a more intimate relationship between the Academia Sinica and higher educational research institutions. I can point out the relationship between the academy and the Peking University History Department as a case in point. Cheng Chen-to, director of the academy archaeology research office, Hsia Nai, deputy director of the office, and such specialists as Kuo Pao-chun and Su Ping-ch'i are teaching archaeology in the History Department of Peking University. Also, Shap Hsun of the university's History Department is now teaching and conducting research work in the Modern History Research Office of the academy. Cooperation of this sort is a very good beginning. To strengthen the relationship between the academy and scientific research in higher education, it is necessary for the academy to assume the leadership and organizational functions. We hope that the academy will regard the research offices of each higher educational institution as its own research stations, and that each of these research offices will look upon the academy as their command headquarters. It is through such cooperation that the scientific research activities of higher education, which encompass all of China, can be organized into a scientific system with the Academia Sinica as the national center of the scientific research network. Only when scientific research is organized in this way can there be the proper division of labor in scientific research in the higher educational institutions throughout the country.

Another problem concerns the clear definition of the objectives of scientific research and the creation of a method of scientific research. Up to the present, institutions of higher learning have considered work in scientific research merely a general course because they lack sufficient experience to work out a clearly defined set of instructions to govern the methodology of scientific research. Most teachers lack a clear understanding of scientific research. Also, since there is no well-established system, scientific research in higher educational institutions is haphazard.

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"Regarding the needs of scientific research, everyone knows that current scientific research is firmly opposed to being estranged from reality and to extreme bookishness. To serve the people and to bring about the Socialist state, scientific research must be coordinated to practical needs and must proceed under the guidance of Marxism-Leninism. Consequently, many teachers in higher educational institutions do not dare to attempt new experiments; they fear error and criticism. I believe that it is necessary to adopt a very cautious attitude toward scientific research, but this fear of experimentation is not cautiousness but conservatism." Scientific research demands exactness, but excessive meticulousness can be detrimental. To fulfill the country's immediate needs, we must bravely bear criticism and practice self-criticism on the scientific research fronts. I do not believe that the nation will ever ask the teachers of higher educational institutions to contribute more than they are able or more than necessity dictates, but they will be expected to make use of their present theoretical knowledge to advance scientific research realistically. Naturally we hope that our scientific research will gradually gain world supremacy.

Up to now, scientific research in many of the higher educational schools has not been properly incorporated in the educational plan and allocated a definite time period in the curriculum. This is one important reason why scientific research has not been satisfactorily developed in higher educational institutions. If scientific research work is to be further developed, it must be systemized. A definite time period and place in the educational plan must be designated for scientific research, and its period must not be used for any other purpose before we can expect the teachers to formulate a practical research program, guarantee its realization, and thus replace random research work with a regular program. Now that specialized majors are to be inaugurated, teachers must be given a period in which to study; otherwise, the special program cannot be achieved. I hope that leaders will give special note to this one point.

The last and most important problem is the study of advanced Soviet experience. The accomplishments of Soviet scientific research have already attained world supremacy. The USSR, at the start of the revolution, also went through a trial period of new scientific research work and accumulated valuable experience in developing scientific research work in their higher educational institutions. Therefore, we hope that the Academia Sinica and the Ministry of Higher Education can organize their efforts and use the Soviet documents on the development of USSR scientific research in higher education or prepare translations of these documents so that we will have responsible guidance in our own development.

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